

REMARKS

The Office Action mailed on January 23, 2009, has been received and its contents carefully considered.

Claims 1-18, 21 and 24 are pending in this application. By this Amendment, claims 1, 7 and 21 are amended. Claim 24 is added. Claims 22 and 23 are canceled without prejudice to or disclaimer of the subject matter recited in those claims. Claims 1 and 21 are independent. Reconsideration of this application in view of the above amendments and the following remarks is respectfully requested.

The Office Action rejects claims 1-9, 13-18 and 21-23 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 6,838,844 to *Shimizu et al.* (hereinafter "*Shimizu*") in view of U.S. Patent Application Publication No. 2005/0133297 to *Chikaraishi* (hereinafter "*Chikaraishi*"). This rejection is respectfully traversed.

Amended claim 1 recites, among other features, that the end of the unitary shaft is press-fitted in the concave portion. This feature, previously recited in claim 21, is further discussed in paragraph [0031] of the disclosure of this application. The Office Action concedes that *Shimizu* fails to teach the above noted feature, and asserts that *Chikaraishi* teaches that feature. However, this assertion is incorrect. *Chikaraishi* teaches, as discussed in paragraph [0140] and further illustrated in Fig. 32, that an Oldham coupling 111 connects the shaft 36 and the drive pulley 37. The Oldham coupling 111 itself is an intermediate portion between the shaft 36 and the drive pulley 37. In this configuration, the shaft 36 is fitted into the Oldham coupling 111, and the drive pulley 37 is also fitted

into the Oldham coupling. Therefore, *Chikaraishi* cannot reasonably be considered to teach, or to have suggested, that the end of the unitary shaft is press-fitted in the concave portion, as recited in claim 1.

Claim 21 recites features similar to those recited in claim 1, and is patentably distinct over the applied references for at least the reasons given above with respect to claim 1.

Claim 7 recites, among other features, that the first end portion of the shaft portion is connected to the outer tubular portion via the connection portion within the outer tubular portion. This feature is described by way of example in paragraph [0033] of the disclosure of this application. As shown in an exemplary embodiment in Fig. 4 of the disclosure of this application, the first engagement portion 61 within the outer tubular position is disposed at a distance from the second engagement portion 62 in an axial direction and in a radial direction. However, *Shimizu* teaches, in Fig. 4, that no such radial distance exists between the engagement member of *Shimizu* shown in Fig. 4. Therefore, the *Shimizu* reference cannot reasonably be considered to teach, or to have suggested, that the first end portion of the shaft portion is connected to the outer tubular portion via the connection portion within the outer tubular portion, as recited in claim 7.

Claim 15 recites, among other features, that the intermediate portion of the unitary shaft is supported by a combination angular ball bearing. *Shimizu* teaches ball bearings 41, 42, 55 and 56, as discussed in col. 7, lines 31-41 and col. 7, lines 65-67, and further illustrated in Figs. 3 and 4. However, *Shimizu* fails to teach any type or characteristics of

these ball bearings. Therefore, *Shimizu* cannot reasonably be considered to teach, or to have suggested, that the intermediate portion of the unitary shaft is supported by a combination angular ball bearing.

Chikaraishi fails to overcome the deficiencies of *Shimizu* as discussed above with respect to claims 7 and 15. In view of the above, no permissible combination of the applied references can reasonably be considered to teach, or to have suggested, the combination of features recited in independent claims 1 and 21. Claims 2-18 and 24 are also allowable, at least for their dependence on allowable independent claim 1, as well as for the separately patentable subject matter that each of these claims recites.

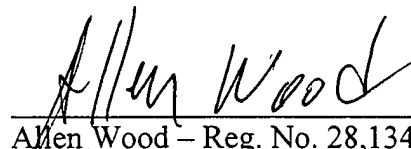
Accordingly, reconsideration and withdrawal of the pending rejections of the Office Action under §103 are respectfully requested.

For the foregoing reasons, it is respectfully submitted that this application is now in condition for allowance. Reconsideration of the application is therefore respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,

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Date



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AMENDMENT

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